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ABSTRACT

This document provides an overview of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), the state's student testing system. MCAS measures the performance of students, schools, and districts by assessing student knowledge of the academic learning standards contained in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The purpose of this document is to assist principals, bilingual education directors, English-as-a-Second-Language staff, and other educators to assess the status of each limited English proficient student and to determine whether he or she is required to participate in MCAS in the spring of year 2000. The document is organized accordingly: Part 1, "Overview of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System"; Part 2, "Overview of Definitions and Policies for Assessing LEP Students," including details concerning the definition of Limited English Proficient (LEP), MCAS participation requirements for LEP students, LEP students with disabilities, student identification forms, and reporting of LEP results; Part 3, "The Spanish Version MCAS Tests," including content areas tested, types of questions, Spanish-version test materials, and test administration guidelines for the spring of 2000. (KFT)

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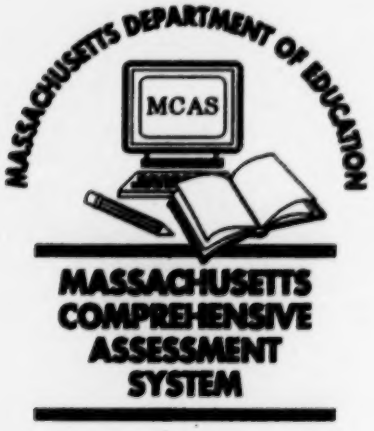

Spring 2000 Update

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Requirements for the Participation of Students with Limited English Proficiency:

A Guide for Educators and Parents

Massachusetts Department of Education

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Massachusetts Department of Education
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The purpose of this document is to provide educators and parents with guidelines for the participation of students with limited English proficiency in the state's student testing program, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. OVERVIEW OF THE MASSACHUSETTS COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM 1

II. OVERVIEW OF DEFINITIONS AND POLICIES FOR ASSESSING LEP STUDENTS 2

DEFINITION OF LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT 2

MCAS PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS FOR LEP STUDENTS 2

English-version Tests 2

Spanish-version Tests 2

LEP STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES 3

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION FORMS 3

REPORTING OF LEP RESULTS 3

III. THE SPANISH-VERSION MCAS TESTS 4

CONTENT AREAS TESTED 4

TYPES OF QUESTIONS 4

SPANISH-VERSION TEST MATERIALS 4

TEST ADMINISTRATION GUIDELINES FOR SPRING 2000 5

I. Overview of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

The *Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System* (MCAS), the state's student testing program, is a required component of the *Education Reform Act* of 1993. MCAS measures the performance of students, schools, and districts by assessing student knowledge of the academic learning standards contained in the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks*. As is true for ***all*** students, the curriculum for Limited English Proficient students should be aligned with the learning standards in the *Curriculum Frameworks*. Students in grades 4, 8, and 10 are tested in three content areas: English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science & Technology. Students in grades 8 and 10 are also tested in History and Social Science. Spanish versions of the MCAS tests in Mathematics, Science & Technology, and (for grades 8 and 10 only) History and Social Science are available to eligible LEP students.

MCAS Question Tryouts will be administered in selected schools at grade 3 *(Reading)*, grade 5 *(Science & Technology* and *History and Social Science)*, grade 6 *(Mathematics)*, and grade 7 *(Reading)*. Students with limited English proficiency at the appropriate grade levels are expected to participate in *MCAS Question Tryouts* if they are otherwise eligible to take MCAS tests, and if the school they attend has been designated as a participating site. *MCAS Question Tryouts* will not be available in Spanish-language versions.

MCAS, along with other components of the Education Reform Act, is designed to strengthen public education in Massachusetts and to ensure that all students are engaged in a challenging curriculum. MCAS is designed to

- inform curriculum and instruction
- provide information on student-level performance
- certify high school diplomas (beginning with the graduating class of 2003)
- measure school and district performance

The purpose of this document is to assist principals, bilingual education directors, English as a Second Language staff, and other educators to assess the status of each limited English proficient student and to determine whether they are required to participate in MCAS in spring 2000.

II. Overview of Definitions and Policies for Assessing LEP Students

Definition of Limited English Proficient

A limited English proficient (LEP) student is defined as "a student whose first language is a language other than English who is unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English."

LEP students may receive instruction in a range of programs and settings that include

- Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs
- two-way bilingual programs
- English as a Second Language (ESL) programs
- "sheltered" English-language programs
- other language support or tutoring

MCAS Participation Requirements for LEP Students

English-version Tests

Limited English proficient students in grades 4, 8, and 10 must take the MCAS tests **in English** if they meet **either** of the following conditions:

1. The student has been enrolled in schools in the (continental) United States for **more than three years;**

OR

2. The student has been enrolled in schools in the (continental) United States for **three or fewer years** and will no longer be enrolled in a bilingual program or receive English as a Second Language support during the following school year.

Spanish-version Tests

Spanish-speaking LEP students who have been enrolled in schools in the (continental) United States for **three or fewer years** must participate in the Spanish versions of the *Mathematics, Science & Technology*, and *History and Social Science* MCAS tests if they meet **all** 3 of the following criteria:

1. The student does not have sufficient fluency in English to participate in the English-language versions of the tests;

AND

2. The student will continue to receive either instruction in a Transitional Bilingual Education program or English as a Second Language support in the 2000-2001 school year;

AND

3. The student can read and write in Spanish.

If students do not satisfy the above criteria to take either the English- or Spanish-versions of the MCAS tests, then they are not required to take MCAS tests.

LEP Students with Disabilities

Limited English proficient students who have a disability must participate in MCAS. The school should determine how the student will participate based

- first, on the student's LEP status; and
- second, on whether the student requires test accommodations or an alternate assessment as determined by the student's IEP or Section 504 Team.

Student Identification Forms

In filling out *Student Identification Forms* for LEP students, the principal or test administrator must identify accurately

- the student's name
- the number of years the student has been enrolled in schools in the United States
- any test(s) the student will not take due to his or her LEP status

Reporting of LEP Results

Test results for LEP students are included in school, district, and state results, and are also reported as a separate category. It is crucial for principals or their designees to correctly identify these students in order for results to be accurately reported.

Those LEP students who are not required, according to the above guidelines, to participate in the spring 2000 MCAS administration will not be counted in school or district scores, nor are individual results reported for these students.

Results of limited English proficient students who are classified as **students with disabilities** are included with scores of students with disabilities.

III. The Spanish-Version MCAS Tests

Since approximately 60 percent of the limited English proficient (LEP) students in Massachusetts are native Spanish speakers, Spanish-language versions of the MCAS tests in *Mathematics, Science & Technology*, and *History and Social Science* are available for eligible Spanish-speaking LEP students. Eligibility restrictions to participate in the Spanish-language versions of the MCAS tests follow.

Content Areas Tested

Spanish-language versions of the MCAS tests for grades 4, 8, and 10 are available in *Mathematics, Science & Technology*, and (grades 8 and 10 only) *History and Social Science*. Test questions are based exclusively on the learning standards contained in the Massachusetts *Curriculum Framework* for each content area. Because test questions focus on learning standards identified for all grades up to and including the tested grade, students must demonstrate cumulative content knowledge and skills.

Students who are eligible to take the Spanish versions of the MCAS tests according to the guidelines above will take the Spanish-version tests during the same time period that the English-version tests are administered (May 15-26, 2000).

Types of Questions

Three types of questions appear on the Spanish-language versions of the MCAS tests.

- **Multiple-choice questions** require students to select the correct answer from a list of four options.
- **Open-response questions** require students to generate, rather than recognize, a response.
- **Short-answer questions** (included only on *Mathematics* tests) require students to generate a brief response, usually a short statement or numeric solution to a computation.

Spanish-Version Test Materials

Students will be issued a separate test booklet for each content area tested:

- *Mathematics*
- *Science & Technology*

- (grades 8 and 10 only) *History and Social Science*

Spanish-version *Student Test Booklets* are issued in Spanish/English format, with identical test questions presented on opposing pages in two languages: left-facing pages present questions in Spanish; right-facing pages present the same questions in English.

Spanish-version *Answer Booklets* (in which students mark their answers) and the reference materials issued to students for use during MCAS *Mathematics* test sessions are presented in Spanish only.

Test Administration Guidelines for Spring 2000

Guidelines for administering the Spanish-language version of MCAS tests (*Mathematics, Science & Technology*, and *History and Social Science*) are provided in the *Test Administrator's Manual (Spanish)*. This manual is intended for use only by bilingual test administrators who have been designated by the school principal to administer the Spanish version of the MCAS tests to eligible Spanish-speaking LEP students. It contains Spanish-language scripts to be read aloud as printed by test administrators to students, as well as instructions to the test administrator (NOT to be read aloud) in English. In order to administer the Spanish-version tests, designated test administrators must be fluent in both Spanish and English.